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TAGS: [KIRF](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: CHRISTIANS RECRUITED FOR SHI'A-LED ELECTORAL  
COALITIONS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor William V. Roebuck for Reason  
s 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Two prominent Christian leaders, Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Selim and the Prime Minister's Advisor for Christian Affairs Georges Bakoos, tell us that the Prime Minister's State of Law Alliance (SLA) has recruited six prominent Christian candidates, including themselves, to run in the January elections. On October 5, Pol M/C met with Bakoos who said that the Christian candidates running with SLA were selected from the various denominations of Christian churches in Iraq (Chaldean, Assyrian, Syriac) and that they were geographically diverse as well with representatives from Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basra. On October 12, Minister Selim told Poloff that the PM himself had wanted to include independent Christians in his coalition and that he had asked Cardinal Emmanuel Delly and other church leaders for candidate recommendations. (Note: At the October 1 ceremony when the PM announced his coalition, several church leaders including Chaldean Bishop Shlaimon Wardouni, Syriac Catholic Archbishop Matti Matouka, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Soryous Hawa, and Armenian Archbishop Avak Asadourian were in attendance. End note.)

¶2. (C) According to Selim, the PM's move to reach out to church leaders upset the traditional Christian political parties whose leaders expressed concern that the church should not involve itself so directly in politics. These leaders also seemed fearful that an open endorsement from church leaders could potentially swing a large number of Christian voters toward the SLA (and away from their parties). However, Selim opined that church leaders would likely refrain from any public endorsements and that in fact Archbishops Matouka and Hawa had already spoken to the media to say that they supported any political party with a nationalist, as opposed to sectarian, political platform. Both Selim and Bakoos also noted that other political parties were recruiting Christian candidates and that leaders of the ISCI-led Iraqi National Alliance (INA) had successfully brought Dr. Khaled Mirza, a prominent Christian and former City Council member from the Karrada neighborhood of Baghdad into their coalition.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: The recruitment of Christians into the SLA and INA coalitions (the two largest political entities in the January elections) represents a continuation of the trend away from political entities focused on sectarian identity and toward broad-based movements with national appeal. While a final decision on whether minority quotas will be included in the national elections law remains outstanding, it appears that regardless, Iraq's Christian community will gain greater representation in the next Parliament (there are currently only two Christian MPs) by virtue of their inclusion with popular coalitions. Perhaps more importantly, any Christian MPs elected as part of the SLA or INA will be allied to larger political blocs that may be in a better position to address the concerns of their community. END COMMENT.  
HILL